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ABSTRACT

In 1970 the City University of New York (CUNY) initiated an open admissions policy that aimed to create an unusually high level of educational opportunity, especially for low-income minority youth. Opponents asserted that this policy so degraded academic standards that CUNY's diplomas lost their value. Using a data set with extensive information on students' achievements from high school through college to more than a decade later, this book examines many of the most significant long-term results and consequences of the open-admissions policy. Students who graduated were able to earn postgraduate degrees at institutions other than CUNY and to obtain good jobs. These jobs, which were far better than the graduates might have obtained otherwise, enabled thousands of individuals to become more substantial taxpayers. Analysis for one year suggests that open-admissions students earned $67 million more than if they had not gone to college. It is also argued that the open-admissions policy enhanced the life chances of the children of graduates. Nevertheless, attacks on the policy resulted in its being scaled back. The experience of CUNY demonstrates that the idea of higher education as a right is still not accepted. Appendixes discuss the quality of the followup sample and present selected statistical tables. (Contains 44 tables, 11 appendix tables, and 276 references.) (SLD)

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